

Message Text

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EXDIS

LONDON FOR SECRETARY AND DICK MOOSE

FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: NEXT STEPS

1. AT THE MOMENT WE FIND OURSELVES CAUGHT BETWEEN THE SALISBURY GROUP WHICH REFUSES TO GO TO A CONFERENCE UNLESS THERE HAS BEEN LOWER LEVEL PREPARATORY WORK INDICATING IT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL AND THE PF WHICH REFUSES TO ENGAGE IN LOWER LEVEL PREPARATORY WORK UNTIL THERE IS A COMMITMENT TO A CONFERENCE. THE PF (AND PROBABLY THE FRONT LINE OR AT LEAST KAUNDA) SEES THE COMMITMENT TO A CONFERENCE BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE CONFERENCE ITSELF AS THE BEGINNING OF A PROCESS WHICH WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY DETAILED DISCUSSIONS. THEY MAY BELIEVE THAT ENGAGING IN SECRET LOW-LEVEL TALKS PROVIDES THE SALISBURY GROUP WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUT OF THE COMMITMENT TOO EASILY AND THERE IS SOME

MERIT TO THIS VIEW. THIS VIEW WOULD ARGUE TO WAIT BEFORE PRESSING DAVID SMITH'S SUGGESTIONS UNTIL THE SALISBURY GROUP IS READY TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO PUBLIC TALKS. IT ASSUMES THE SITUATION IN RHODESIA WILL CONTINUE TO WORSEN IN THE MEANTIME
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OR AT LEAST NOT IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY WHICH IS PROBABLY CORRECT.

2. TO PASS UP THIS OPENING, HOWEVER, RISKS PERMITTING THE SITUATION TO CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE AND ALLOWING THE TWO SIDES TO BECOME FURTHER COMMITTED TO OPPOSING PATHS. IT WOULD SEEM THEREFORE THAT WE SHOULD PUSH IN TWO DIRECTIONS AT

ONCE -- ON THE PF TO ACCEPT WORKING LEVEL, PREPARATORY (AND PERHAPS SECRET) TALKS AND ON THE SALISBURY GROUP TO MAKE A FORMAL AND PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO TALKS WITH A DATE AND PLACE IN MIND.

3. WE UNDERSTAND SECRETARIES VANCE AND OWEN ARE CONSULTING AND WILL BE DISCUSSING NEXT STEPS IN RHODESIA AMONG OTHER THINGS. SUGGEST THEREFORE THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO HOWTO PROCEED ON THESE TWO PATHS. WITH REGARD TO PRESSING THE PF TOWARDS DIRECT TALKS BELIEVE THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO CONTACT

NKOMO IN LONDON OR WASHINGTON. IN VIEW OF MUGABE'S NEGATIVE ATTITUDE (REF MY MAPUTO TELS) IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT THAT THIS MEETING SHOULD BE AT HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL, PREFERABLY SECRETARY OF STATE.

4. AT ANY SUCH MEETING IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT THAT NKOMO UNDERSTAND THE ALTERNATIVES. THEREFORE WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR OUR IMPRESSION OF DETERMINATION ON THE PART OF SMITH AND HIS GROUP TO PRESS AHEAD WITH THEIR EFFORTS TO WIN OVER GUERRILLAS, HOLD AN ELECTION AND TURN OVER POWER BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. TO THIS WE SHOULD ADD OUR OWN VIEW THAT IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL IN SUCH AN EFFORT AND A FAIR ELECTION IS HELD IN WHICH MOST OF THE POPULATION PARTICIPATE WE WILL BE OBLIGED TO RECOGNIZE THE RESULTS. WE WOULD REGRET THIS COURSE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENTS HOWEVER BECAUSE WE FEAR THAT IT WOULD NOT END THE WAR. WE THEREFORE BELIEVE IT IS IN ALL OF OUR INTERESTS TO AVOID IT BY MOVING TO AN ALTERNATE PATH. THIS COULD BE INITIATED THROUGH WORKING LEVEL PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ALL THE PARTIES UNDER OUR AUSPICES TO TRY TO BROADEN THE AREA OF

AGREEMENT AND PREPARE FOR AN ALL PARTY CONFERENCE.

5. DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF THAT MEETING GRAHAM AND I MIGHT RETURN TO SALISBURY BY WAY OF MAPUTO TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER WITH MUGABE -- THOUGH I BELIEVE WE SHOULD NOT DO THIS BEFORE VIEIRA (AND POSSIBLY MACHEL) HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOFTEN HIM UP A LITTLE.

6. IN THE MEANTIME WE WILL HOLD DISCUSSIONS IN DAR TODAY (FRIDAY THE 16TH) WITHOUT MENTIONING THE SMITH SUGGESTION AS DR. OWEN HAS INSTRUCTED GRAHAM. WE TRAVEL TO LUSAKA ON SATURDAY AND ARE TENTATIVELY PLANNING ON BLANTYRE (WHERE ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING WORKED ON TO FLY TO THE INTERIOR TO SEE BANDA TUESDAY THE 20TH), ON TO GABORONE THE 21ST AND PRETORIA AND SALISBURY THE 22ND.

7. IN SALISBURY WE CAN USE WHATEVER PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE
WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE TO PRESS FOR SOME POSITIVE STATEMENTS
ABOUT A CONFERENCE AND PERHAPS A CLEARER PRIVATE COMMITMENT
TO DATE AND PLACE.
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